

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 04995 280857Z
ACTION NEA-07

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /022 W
-----124174 280909Z /11

O 280846Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 9402

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 04995

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, SY, US
SUBJECT: MY PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS

REF: STATE 217787

1. I HAVE NO CLEAR INDICATION AS TO WHEN PRESIDENT ASSAD WILL RETURN FROM VACATION IN LATAKIA. MFA OFFICIALS EXPECT THAT HE WILL COME TO DAMASCUS PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE FOR WEST GERMANY IN MID-SEPTEMBER, BUT THE BEST GUESS IS THAT THIS WOULD ONLY BE FOR A FEW DAYS AND THE PRESS OF BUSINESS MAY BE TOO GREAT FOR HIM TO RECEIVE CREDENTIALS OF THE FOUR AMBASSADORS NOW WAITING FOR PRESENTATION CEREMONIES.

2. WHILE I CANNOT COUNT ON GETTING TO SEE ASSAD IN THE NEAR FUTURE, YOUR ASSUMPTION IS CORRECT THAT I WOULD BE ABLE TO SEE KHADDAM AS OFTEN AS IS NECESSARY PRIOR TO THE CREDENTIALS CEREMONY. KHADDAM, HOWEVER, IS MAKING AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE SOVIET UNION AUGUST 29, AND, IF DEPARTMENT WANTED ME TO TRY TO SEE HIM URGENTLY, I WOULD HAVE TO REQUEST THE APPOINTMENT IMMEDIATELY.

3. I DOUBT THAT KHADDAM WOULD BE ANXIOUS TO SEE ME BEFORE HIS TRIP TO THE SOVIET UNION WHICH WOULD PROBABLY LAST THREE OR FOUR DAYS. EVEN THOUGH MY APPOINTMENTS WITH
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KHADDAM ARE NOT ROUTINELY REVEALED TO THE PRESS AND DO NOT ATTRACT PUBLIC ATTENTION, THE SOVIETS WOULD PROBABLY LEARN OF MY CALL AND MIGHT TAKE EXCEPTION TO SUCH A MEETING ON THE EVE OF KHADDAM'S VISIT. TO AVOID BEING PLACED IN SUCH AN AWKWARD POSITION, KHADDAM MIGHT REFUSE TO SEE ME UNTIL HIS RETURN. MY ALTERNATIVE, IF KHADDAM FINDS IT INCONVENIENT TO SEE ME RIGHT NOW, WOULD BE TO GO TO DEPFONMIN

KADDOUR, WHO WOULD GIVE THE TRANSCRIPT OF OUR DISCUSSION TO KHADDAM PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE. IN ANY CASE, I WOULD EXPECT TO BE ABLE TO SEE HIM IMMEDIATELY AFTER HIS RETURN FROM MOSCOW.

4. IT IS NOT UNUSUAL FOR AMBASSADORS TO WAIT AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF TIME BEFORE PRESENTING CREDENTIALS TO ASSAD. SOME, HOWEVER, HAVE BEEN PERMITTED TO GO ABOUT THEIR BUSINESS AS USUAL IN THE INTERIM, AND I INTEND TO TRY TO FOLLOW THIS PRECEDENT. SEELYE

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